

Alden Library Project in Line for Major Grants

State officials last week said Duxbury's Alden Library Project is eligible for 40 percent of its construction costs under newly-enacted funding.

Also last week, School Supt. Eileen Williams reiterated the School Committee's decision to declare Upper Alden "surplus for educational use."

According to Patience Jackson, Massachusetts Board of Library commissioners (MBLC) Building Consultant, \$45 million will be dispersed to local libraries in only 2 upcoming rounds, the first of which will open March, 1995.

"Duxbury is in an excellent position to enter the first round of competition," Jackson told town and library officials at a meeting in Duxbury.

Unlike other grants, a specific formula will determine the amount each project can expect to receive if selected.

"This procedure, for the first time, does not penalize towns that are perceived as affluent," Jackson said. "The merit of the application is the determining factor."

In a recent application for federal library funds, the Duxbury plan for Upper Alden won the state's top award—\$200,000, pending appropriation—which the MBLC administered.

Jackson advised officials the MBLC would not approve expansion of the Duxbury library at its existing site. She told them the existing site could not safely accommodate increased traffic and parking and would impinge on nearby school property.

She criticized the current library's interior constraints, citing security and accessibility hazards for patrons and staff.

At the same time, she praised the Upper Alden plan for its open and flexible design. She also complimented Upper Alden's handsome brick exterior and sentimental significance to the town.

"Schools tend to make excellent libraries with the right design," she told officials.

In response to a request from Library Trustee chairman Jane Bradley, School Superintendent Williams reviewed the status of the Upper Alden building from the schools' perspective.

The School Committee transferred Upper Alden to the selectmen in 1992 but retained ownership of Lower Alden, which has approximately 20 classrooms. In April

Duxbury Clipper, Wednesday, September 28, 1994

1993 the committee unanimously reconfirmed its declaration of Upper Alden as surplus for education use.

Quoting recent enrollment projections, Dr. Williams added, "It is still expected that Lower Alden would meet any foreseeable future needs for increased student populations."

The library's plan to expand into Upper Alden was presented at the 1992 Annual Town Meeting, where a majority approved it. This tally fell short of the required two-thirds by 44 votes.

Library officials expect to pursue public and private funding and return to the 1995 Annual Town meeting. A Town Meeting vote of approval is required for the state grant.

The state library construction funds were authorized by Gov. William Weld in August. Libraries must submit a letter of intent to apply by the end of October and a final application in March 1995. Awards up to 40 percent of allowable construction costs will be granted in July 1995.

Once selected, funds will be released as construction proceeds.